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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR EB/IFD/OIA, EUR/ERA, AND EUR/AGS

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SUBJECT: AUSTRIAN EU PRESIDENCY, FIRST HALF OF 2006 -

FIRST OUTLINE OF AGENDA

11. (SBU) This message provides an informal, first outline of the GoA's planned work program and a calendar of events for Austria's EU Presidency in the first half of 2006. We developed this information from public sources and personal contacts. This outline reflects a preliminary phase of planning. We will update it as more information becomes available.

12. (SBU) Begin outline:

International issues

-- EU Summit with the U.S. in Austria;
-- EU Summit with Russia in Moscow;
-- EU Summit with Canada, most likely in Canada;
-- EU Summit with Latin America in Austria;
-- EU - Balkans Summit, which will deal with the status of Kosovo, the Republic Srpska, and Montenegro, but only if there is a reasonable chance of success;
-- Preparations for the spring IMF and World Bank meetings; and
-- Preparations for the 6th ASEM (Asia-European Meeting) Summit in Finland in the second half of 2006.

EU Enlargement

-- Final preparations for the accession of Romania and Bulgaria in 2007; and
-- Accession negotiations with Turkey, possibly Croatia and also Macedonia.

EU Budget

-- Finalization of the EU's financial framework (EU Budget) for 2007-2013; and
-- The related issues of financing for the EU's structural fund, the 7th framework program for research, and trans-European networks (TEN).

Research

-- 7th Framework Program for Research and Development for 2006-2010;
-- Security research; and
-- The European Space Program.

EU Constitution

-- The GoA expects it may have to deal with a possible no-vote from at least one member state, such as the U.K., in 12006.

Trade and Customs

-- Work on a new simplified customs codex;
-- Reform of the EU's preferential arrangements; and
-- Implementation of decisions from the December 2005 WTO Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong.

Still unclear, but also on the GoA's radar screen are:

-- A Gulf Cooperation Council for the possible ratification of a free trade association;
-- Mediterranean region (Euromed) negotiations with Syria;
-- The potential inclusion of Libya in the Barcelona process;
-- A free trade agreement with the Andean Community of Nations and Central America; and
-- Some as yet unclear activity focused on South Eastern Europe.

ECOFIN

-- Decision on the participation of new members in stage three of the Exchange Rate Mechanism II (ERM II) as a final step before introducing the Euro;
-- Stability and Convergence Programs;
-- Economic policy guidelines 2006-2008; and
-- Review of employment policy guidelines.

Other issues

-- Possible spring summit to review progress of the relaunched Lisbon agenda;
-- Work on the EU's environmental sustainability strategy (climate protection);
-- A new consumer protection strategy for 2007;
-- A new Youth Program for 2007;
-- A successor program to "Culture 2000;" and
-- Mediaplus - media training.

13. (SBU) Below is a calendar of events for January-June 2006, as far as it is available now:

January 2006

6 Meeting of the GoA with the European Commission
12 - 14 Justice and Home Affairs Informal Council in Vienna
19 - 21 Ministerial Conference on Employment and Social Affairs (possibly in Villach)
26 - 28 Ministerial Conference on European Identity in Salzburg

February 2006

10 - 11 Gymnich Informal EU Foreign Ministerial in Salzburg

March 2006

2 - 3 Transportation Ministers Conference in Bregenz
7 - 8 Defense Ministers Conference in Innsbruck
16 - 17 Education Ministers Conference
20 - 22 European Tourism Conference
23 - 24 European Council Meeting
30 - April 4 Health Ministers and Youth Ministers Conference in Bad Ischl

April 2006

6 - 7 Informal Council of Economics and Finance Ministers (ECOFIN)
8 - 9 ASEM (Asia-European Meeting) Finance Ministers Meeting
20 - 22 Informal Ministerial Conference on Competitiveness in Graz

May 2006

11 - 3 Latin America Summit
19 - 21 Informal Environmental Ministers Council in Rust
25 - 26 EU - Mediterranean Conference
28 - 30 Informal Agricultural Council in Krems

June 2006

15 - 16 European Council Meeting

BROWN